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UNCLAS VATICAN 005714

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI); EUR/ERA, IO

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SODANO HINTS AT SHIFT IN HOLY SEE UN STATUS; TAKES  
AIM AT PREEMPTIVE STRIKE, EU CONSTITUTION

1. (U) THE HOLY SEE IS CONSIDERING UPGRADING ITS STATUS  
AT THE UN FROM PERMANENT OBSERVER TO FULL MEMBER. IN AN  
INTERVIEW WITH CENTRIST ITALIAN DAILY "CORRIERE DELLA SERA"  
PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 24, VATICAN SECRETARY OF STATE (PM  
EQUIVALENT) CARDINAL ANGELO SODANO SAID THE HOLY SEE WAS  
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STUDYING WAYS TO AUGMENT ITS PRESENCE AT THE UN. ASKED IF  
THIS MEANT BECOMING A FULL MEMBER, SODANO RESPONDED, "IF IT  
WOULD BE USEFUL, I'M NOT EXCLUDING IT." SODANO NOTED THAT  
SWITZERLAND HAD RECENTLY CHANGED ITS STATUS TO MEMBER AND  
THAT, "THE FORM OF OUR PRESENCE IS AN OPEN QUESTION."

2. (U) SODANO ALSO TOUCHED ON A POSSIBLE PREEMPTIVE STRIKE  
ON IRAQ SAYING THAT THE TERM DID NOT FEATURE IN THE UN'S  
VOCABULARY AND THAT DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS SHOULD  
BE EXHAUSTED BEFORE ANY OTHER HYPOTHESIS IS PROPOSED.

3. (U) SODANO REAFFIRMED THE HOLY SEE'S DESIRE TO SEE  
CHRISTIANITY, AND RELIGION IN GENERAL, GIVEN A PLACE IN THE  
PROPOSED EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION (SEPTTEL). HE SAID THE HOLY  
SEE EXPECTS EUROPE'S CHRISTIAN PATRIMONY TO BE MENTIONED IN  
ARTICLE 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION -- DEALING WITH EUROPEAN  
VALUES -- AND THAT A COMPLETELY NEW ARTICLE WOULD ENSHRINE  
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE RIGHT OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN  
EUROPE TO SELF-GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION.

4. (SBU) COMMENT: SODANO'S COMMENTS ON THE HOLY SEE'S  
STATUS AT THE UN REFLECT SOME INTERNAL FRUSTRATION ABOUT THE  
LIMITATIONS ON THE HOLY SEE'S VOICE IN INTERNATIONAL FORA  
ARISING FROM THEIR STATUS AS A PERMANENT OBSERVER.  
TRADITIONALLY, THE HOLY SEE HAS ENJOYED THE FREEDOM ITS  
UNIQUE STATUS OFFERS IT AS A VOICE WITHIN, BUT NOT OF, THE  
UN SYSTEM. WHILE A MORAL VOICE HAS SOME CLOUT, MANY VATICAN  
DIPLOMATS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT A VOTE -- ESPECIALLY IN THE  
SECURITY COUNCIL AND AFFILIATED UN AGENCIES -- MAY BE MORE  
EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING THE HOLY SEE'S INTERNATIONAL AGENDA.  
FOR EXAMPLE, THE HOLY SEE'S OUTGOING FAO REPRESENTATIVE  
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RECENTLY SUGGESTED IN AN "30 DAYS" ARTICLE ARTICLE IN  
CATHOLIC MONTHLY "30 DAYS" THAT THE HOLY SEE COULD HAVE BEEN  
MORE INFLUENTIAL IN COMBATING WORLD HUNGER IF IT WERE A  
VOTING MEMBER OF THE FAO. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE  
ONGOING STRUGGLE OVER A GLOBAL BAN ON HUMAN CLONING HAS  
STRENGTHENED THE DEBATE ON THIS ISSUE WITHIN THE HOLY SEE.  
SWITZERLAND'S CHANGE OF STATUS HAS CLEARLY SPARKED SOME  
RECONSIDERATION WITHIN THE HOLY SEE AS TO WHETHER THE TIME  
IS RIGHT TO MAKE A SHIFT. WITH CURRENT UN PERMREP RENATO  
MARTINO RETURNING TO ROME AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS IN NEW YORK,  
THIS ISSUE IS LIKELY TO BE INTENSIVELY DEBATED IN THE MONTHS  
AHEAD. A DECISION TO UPGRADE WOULD MARK A SIGNIFICANT  
DEPARTURE IN THE HOLY SEE'S APPROACH TO PURSUIT OF ITS  
FOREIGN POLICY GOALS.

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